

Message Text

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46 R

ACTION PER-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 (ISO) W

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R 150915Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1872

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

UNCLAS JIDDA 5051

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: APER, SA

SUBJECT: LANGUAGE DESIGNATED POSITIONS

REF: STATE 160235

SUMMARY: WE HAVE CONCLUDED THAT ONE POL/MIL SLOT SHOULD BE DROPPED AS AN LDP AND ONE POL SLOT ADDED AS AN LDP. ONLY THREE OF THE POST'S SIX LDP'S ARE PRESENTLY FILLED BY ARABISTS. WE BELIEVE ARABISTS ARE NOT EFFECTIVE IN ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WORK UNTIL THEY REACH 4/4 LEVEL. WE ALSO BELIEVE THAT MONETARY INCENTIVES SHOULD BE GIVEN TO HARD LANGUAGE TRAINEES. THE EMBASSY QUESTIONS PRESENT TRAINING IN FSI BEIRUT FOR 10 MONTHS FOLLOWED BY ASSIGNMENT FOLLOWED BY MORE TRAINING. THE EMPHASIS SHOULD BE PUT ON PRODUCING 4/4 ARABISTS NO MATTER HOW LONG THE TRAINING AND THE FSI SHOULD BE TRANSFERRED FROM BEIRUT TO AMMAN TO ACHIEVE THIS END. END SUMMARY.

1. POST HAS REVIEWED LDP'S PER REFTTEL AND HAS COME TO FOLLOWING CONCLUSIONS. FIRST, THE EMBASSY HAS ACQUIRED A NEW POLITICAL SLOT WHICH IS TO BE LANGUAGE-DESIGNATED. THE ELIMINATES THE NECESSITY OF HAVING THE POLITICAL/ MILITARY POSITION, CURRENTLY AN LDP, FILLED BY AN ARABIST. WHILE IT WOULD BE EXTREMELY HELPFUL FOR THE POL/MIL OFFICER TO BE AN ARABIST, OVER NINETY PERCENT OF HIS WORK DEALS WITH EITHER AMERICAN MILITARY OR SAUDI MILITARY WHO SPEAK ENGLISH VERY WELL. A LISTING OF OUR LDP'S WITH REQUIRED SKILL LEVELS FOLLOWS:

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POS NO	FUNCTIONAL TITLE	INCUMBENT	LEVEL
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00-001	DCM	HORAN	3/3
11-078	POL/MIL OFF	MANGAN	3PLUS/2PLUS
20-084	ECON/COMM OFF	BUTCHER	3/3
30-090	CONSULAR OFF	GREEN	2/2
10-057	POL OFF	MURPHY	3/3

DHAHRAN

00-001	PRINCIPAL OFF	BAHTI	2/2
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2. WE WISH TO POINT OUT, HOWEVER, THAT THE DEARTH OF ARABISTS OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS HAS MADE IT EXTREMELY DIFFICULT FOR THE EMBASSY TO COMPLY FULLY WITH LDP GUIDELINES. ONLY THREE OF THE SIX LDP'S IN COUNTRY ARE NOW FILLED WITH LANGUAGE-QUALIFIED OFFICERS. FOR EXAMPLE, IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE CONSULATE TO HAVE AN ARABIST ON ITS STAFF. WITHOUT BEING ABLE TO SPEAK AND READ ARABIC, THE CONSULAR OFFICER MUST DEPEND COMPLETELY ON THE LOCAL STAFF TO INTERPRET FOR HIM AND TO VERIFY BIRTH CERTIFICATES, TRAVEL DOCUMENTS, ETC. BEFORE SIGNING A VISA. ALTHOUGH THE POSITION IS LANGUAGE-DESIGNATED, THE PRESENT CONSULAR OFFICER IS NOT AN ARABIST. THE LDP IN THE ECON/COMMERCIAL SECTION IS ALSO NOT FILLED BY AN ARABIST LDP. FINALLY , THE PRINCIPAL OFFICER POSITION AT THE DHAHRAN CONSULATE GENERAL IS AN LDP WITHOUT AN ARABIST.

4. IN ORDER TO INTERPRET FOR THE AMBASSADOR, ONE OF THE ARABIST POSITIONS IN THE ECONOMIC OR POLITICAL SECTIONS MUST BE FILLED BY AN OFFICER WITH A STRONG 4/4 RATING IN ARABIC. WE WOULD QUESTION, ALSO , CRITERION IN PARA. 3, SUB. B IN REFTEL. POST HAS FOUND THAT OFFICERS AT 3/3 LEVEL IN ARABIC CAN CONDUCT LITTLE POLITICAL OR ECONOMIC BUSINESS IN THE LANGUAGE. ARABISTS MUST APPROACH OR ATTAIN THE 4/4 LEVEL BEFORE THEIR LANGUAGE BECOMES AN EFFECTIVE TOOL IN THEIR EVERYDAY DUTIES. THIS IS NOT DUE SO MUCH TO FSI BEIRUT GIVING SCORES TO ARABISTS THAT ARE HIGHER THAN THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS; BUT TO REGIONAL DIFFERENCES IN SYNTAX AND PRONUNCIATION IN DIFFERENT

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ARAB COUNTRIES. WE URGE ALSO THAT STRONGER INCENTIVES SHOULD BE GIVEN TO OFFCERS STUDYING DIFFICULT LANGUAGES. OTHERWISE THE TWENTY-ONE MONTHS OF LEARNING ARABIC, FOR INSTANCE, IS HARDLY ATTRACTIVE TO CAREER OFFICERS WHO ALREADY CONSIDER LONG-TERM LANGUAGE TRAINING AS SOMEWHAT OF A CAREER VACUUM. SKILL IN LEARNING A HARD LANGUAGE SHOULD BE REWARDED EITHER BY AWARDED PROGRESSIVE GRADE-STEP INCREASES AT MILESTONES OF 3/3 AND

4/4 LEVELS OF PROFICIENCY OR BY STRAIGHT CASH GRANTS
MADE YEARLY TO OFFICERS REACHING AND MAINTAINING A
HIGH LEVEL OF COMPETENCE IN A HARD LANGUAGE.

5. EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS THAT TO MITIGATE THE RELUCTANCE
OF YOUNGER OFFICERS TO STUDY ARABIC, SOME ARE BEING SENT
TO FSI BEIRUT FOR AN INTRODUCTORY 10 MONTHS TO BE
FOLLOWED, IT IS HOPED, BY ANOTHER 11 TO 14 MONTHS AFTER
A FIRST ASSIGNMENT IN THE FIELD. THIS APPROACH WILL
YIELD EVEN FEWER AND MORE RELUCTANT ARABISTS THAN THE
PREVIOUS POLICY OF A 21-MONTH ASSIGNMENT. A STUDENT
WILL LEARN VIRTUALLY NOTHING OF PROFESSIONAL USE IN
10 MONTHS; THEREAFTER HE WILL AVOID FURTHER ARABIC
TRAINING BECAUSE OF THE DOUBLE DISLOCATION INVOLVED
(OR TRIPLE IF HE BEGINS WITH 6 MONTHS IN FSI WASHINGTON,
WHERE HE LEARNS LESS AND MORE SLOWLY THAN IN BEIRUT.)

6. IN GENERAL, WE WOULD SAY THAT AS ENGLISH LANGUAGE
SKILLS IN THE ARAB WORLD INCREASE, THE EMPHASIS IN FSI
SHOULD SHIFT TO PRODUCING GOOD 4/4 ARABISTS. IT IS ONLY
ARABISTS OF THIS LEVEL ON THE EMBASSY STAFF THAT WE HAVE
FOUND ABLE TO TRANSACT ECONOMIC OR POLITICAL BUSINESS
WITH THEIR ARAB COUNTERPARTS, AND CAUSE THEIR ARABIC TO
PREVAIL WHEN EACH PARTY KNOWS SOMETHING OF THE OTHER'S
LANGUAGE (AS IS USUALLY THE CASE). ACCORDINGLY THE
ARABIC OF OUR LINGUIST OFFICERS GETS PRACTICE AND MAY
IMPROVE; THE ARABIC OF OUR OTHER OFFICERS IS RUSTING
AWAY, AND WE IMAGINE THINGS ARE THE SAME AT OTHER
MIDDLE EAST POSTS.

7. FINALLY, SOME ARABISTS IN THE EMBASSY ARE FIRMLY
CONVINCED THAT IN ORDER TO TRAIN 4/4 ARABISTS, FSI
SHOULD BE MOVED FROM BEIRUT WITH ITS COSMOPOLITAN DI-
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VERSIONS AND THE LINGUISTIC IDIOSYNCRASIES OF THE
LEBANESE DIALECT TO LESS DISTRACTING AND MORE SPARTAN
SURROUNDINGS. THEY BELIEVE AMMAN WITH ITS PURER DIA-
LECT AND MORE ISOLATED LOCATION TO BE PREFERABLE BY
FAR TO REMAINING IN THE LEAD-SCARRED FLESHPOTS OF BEI-
RUT.
AKINS

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